

## Early Days of the Public Health Education Section

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A HALF century of American Public Health Association history unfolded before its Section on Health Education and Publicity was born. The infant arrived not with a silver spoon in its mouth; in fact its early days were precarious ones. Once these were successfully past, the lusty youngster showed vitality and grew rapidly and now numbers 806 members, of whom 137 are Fellows. Its name meanwhile has been changed to the Section on Public Health Education.

The delegate to the Association's Annual Meeting in 1920, who came because he was starved for a bit of nourishment that would help him grow up to his job of health education, would have to shop from section to section to satisfy his hunger. He might even return home still hungry and without having been warmed by the companionship of kindred spirits who were equally famished. There was a growing number of such members of the Association whose chief interest was health education, in the very bosom of the public health family they felt lost. Our hypothetic delegate was free as in a cafeteria, to choose from the programs of the eight sections into which the Association was then divided; but what choice did he have? He was welcome to listen to a paper on "Sanitation in Bakeries," or, if he were not particularly bread-minded, to a paper on "Hookworm in California Gold Mines," in the Industrial Hygiene Section. From there he had the privi-

lege of wandering to the meeting of the Laboratory Section to hear a treatise on "Detection of Manural Pollution in Milk," another on "Standardization of Botulism Antitoxin," and if he was still awake, a paper on "The Helpless Narcotic." The Food and Drug Section offered him a dissertation on "Evaporation of Fruits and Vegetables," and Vital Statistics tried to lure his attendance by offering a paper on "Birth and Death Certificates as Legal Evidence." Surely his pulse quickened when he discovered that in the Child Hygiene Section he would hear about "Mothercraft Instruction for School Girls." He might gather some crumbs there, and he wrote on his cuff (the detachable kind) the time and place for the meeting of the Industrial Hygiene Section where he was promised a paper on "Health Education in Industry."

Among these scattered but fairly numerous forgotten men and women who were stirring restlessly there was one catalyst, Evart G. Routzahn, who today is held in endearing memory by the Section as its father. Routzahn found a responsive champion in Dr. William F. Snow, who in turn interested Dr. Lee K. Frankel, Past President of the Association, in the project of organizing a health education group. Routzahn had many friends and a persuasive personality and soon there was a well-voiced demand for recognition of those who needed help in health education practice. At the jubilee meeting of the Association, cele-

brating its fiftieth anniversary and held in New York, November 14-18, 1921, there appeared for the first time a special section program devoted entirely to health education. Permission to form a provisional section had been granted by the Governing Council, and the program was held under the Section's auspices. The purpose of the session was described in the printed program in these words:

This session aims to bring together the public health workers who are interested in popular health education and publicity. The aim will be to take some first steps toward frankly facing the practical problems which need to be solved in order to secure the results desired from the millions of pieces of printed matter that are being distributed, the great number of addresses, and the increasing use of a growing variety of educational material.

That first session verified the belief and contention that potential interest existed; it was well attended and the discussion was lively. The Symposium on Motion Pictures was conducted by Mr. Routzahn as chairman, and six persons participated. The second session was devoted to a symposium on *How To Further Progress in Health Education and Publicity*, led by Dr. Snow, and again there were several energetic participants. The spontaneity of these meetings contrasted favorably with the usual formality of other Section meetings and this at once attracted the younger members of the Association who felt no particular allegiance to a given Section and, perhaps, caused some lifting of eyebrows of older members. At the ensuing meeting of the Governing Council held a month later, an influential member reported favorably on the Section, stated that it had attracted 175 persons, and recommended that the Section be continued on probation, so to speak, for another year.

The following year, 1922, the Association met in Cleveland. Dr. Lee K.

Frankel was chairman and B. R. Rickards, secretary of the trying-to-be-born section. Again progressiveness was reflected in the unique program. It was something of an innovation to invite non-members of the Association, men not identified with public health, to take a leading part in the program, but that is what the Section did. William Feathers and William Henry Baker, both eminent in the fields of typography and publicity, conducted at the first session what was called a "Clinic on Printed Matter." Samples of health publications had been selected for review, analysis, and criticism. Copies had been supplied to the audience and the two experts analyzed one after another of the pamphlets from the standpoints of copy, form, and typography. That was a lively and instructive session and stirred much comment which led to the improvement of printed matter (and how sorely that was needed!), for the authoritative words of men who were in no way connected with public health and who could view the products objectively, carried weight. So successful was this technic that "clinics" continued to be the popular type of program for the Section for years after; and they have not yet lost their attraction-power and interest. The second session was devoted to a symposium on newspaper publicity. Once more permission to conduct a session on health education the next year was granted.

At the Boston meeting, held in 1923, there was another Clinic on Printed Matter, under the chairmanship of Evart G. Routzahn and the leadership of Phillip S. Platt, and there was also a luncheon session at which Motion Picture Programs and Problems were discussed. As usual, the attendance was good, so good that those standing in the doorway attracted others who were curious to learn what the excitement was about, and thus spread the

fame of the Section. The big news event however, was that the Section had been accepted in full status—at last the lusty urchin was weaned and legitimized! That year the Fellowship plan was introduced and only Fellows were eligible to hold office—which put a strain on the Section for, while its membership had grown somewhat, only a few were Fellows. We did, however, manage to assemble a slate, and duly elected H. E. Kleinschmidt, Chairman, B. R. Rickards, Vice Chairman, and Marjorie Delavan, Secretary. With high hopes we cheered ourselves and looked forward to the next meeting.

Though now properly recognized and with representation on the Governing Council, the Section realized full well that only struggle would keep it alive. Before leaving the Boston meeting the half dozen of us who were carrying the responsibility resolved that we would employ the shining hours until the next meeting by building up the membership, by trying to serve the members, and by planning our next meeting long in advance. The officers were widely scattered—Albany, N. Y., Lansing, Mich., and Toledo, Ohio; but the mail served us well and in our travels we did manage one or two visits. Meanwhile, Routzahn in New York saw to it that readers of the *American Journal of Public Health* were not neglected, and from his office, bits of colored paper with cryptic messages, passing thoughts, helpful hints, fluttered to our several desks. Sir William Osler always kept a package of post cards handy on which he jotted brief notes to his friends on the spur of the moment—and what a rich source of information these cards were later when they were collected by his biographer! Routzahn used memorandum pads of various hues and a typewriter that seemed to have no punctuation marks. What would you make of a pink slip

coming in the morning mail like this:

HEK

Smith wants help on movies

Bananas are being advertised as health food—true?

Send Jones ideas on newspaper leads

EGR

Routzahn's telegraphic confetti was the subject of good-natured banter, which he enjoyed; but that his memoranda commanded attention and stimulated us to act was self evident.

At the Association's meeting held in October, 1924, at Detroit, the Section, like a small boy at a family party, really made its existence known. Besides its two sessions it joined with the Vital Statistics Section in a third meeting, and sponsored two luncheon meetings and a dinner.

For the third time a clinic on printed matter was conducted, testifying to the popularity of this type of program. But the session that was long remembered by the many who crowded into the room was one on Newspaper Publicity. This time, two outsiders, E. G. Burrows, of the Department of Journalism of the University of Michigan, and Lee A. White of the *Detroit News*, and one speaker long identified with health education, Philip P. Jacobs, led the symposium. A note printed in the program stated: "The audience will be supplied with newspaper articles discussed by the speakers." When this session was planned we wondered how to furnish the audience with clinical material, which is a necessary part of the clinic technic. Like medical students who crane their necks vainly to see what the surgeon is doing, our audience would not be able to follow the clinicians as they analyzed the subjects before them unless they had copies at hand. Furthermore, one value of the printed matter clinic was that the audience accumulated samples of good and poor pamphlets, with the clinician's comments, and carried them home for

guidance in their future printing plans. How could clinical material consisting of newspaper articles be furnished? The difficulty was solved with the help of Mr. White. He promised that if we would collect clippings of the articles we wished to have examined, he would have them reprinted in standard newspaper form by his newspaper, *The Detroit News*. To Marjorie Delavan goes the credit for having assembled from all parts of the country a fine assortment of short news articles on health which had actually been printed, and these were arranged on a newspaper page under the masthead of the *News*. A plentiful supply was printed. The evening before the session, a few daredevil members of the Section peddled these sheets in newsboy fashion among the delegates, in the hotel lobby and at the entrance to the ball room where guests congregated for the Association's annual dinner. It was not a very dignified performance but our customers were amused and even some venerable Fathers in Israel smiled tolerantly at the adolescent antics of this new Section—well, they were the “publicity boys,” and why shouldn't they practise their trade even at a serious conclave.

Next day our assembly room was crowded with eager listeners and with a liberal sprinkling of old-timers from other sections who came to see the fun. All three speakers did a superb job; once again the Section had proved its reason for being—it was established and feeling its oats. A few more Fellows had cast their lot with the new Section and there was little difficulty in finding able candidates for office.

Like other Sections, ours was given the privilege of occupying a department in the monthly *Journal*. Routzahn was appointed editor, and filled the columns with short items collected from everywhere—a new set of posters put out by the Blank Health Department, a novel stereopticon device, quotations

from a telling speech, source material on this subject and that. It meant, undoubtedly, that he spent much of his time collecting and classifying such material and writing many letters. His zeal in keeping in touch with health education activities all over the country was amazing.

Today Health Education Headquarters has become an established institution at the Association's Annual Meeting. There the novices and the veterans congregate, and there they find an abundance of material, all neatly indexed and displayed, with attendants in charge always willing to assist the searcher for ideas. Posters, booklets, exhibit devices, catalogues—a complete department store of health education materials and methods. This too was Routzahn's creation. And always, Mary Swain Routzahn was so closely associated with Evart that it became customary to speak of “The Routzahns.”

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At the Ninth Institute on Public Health Education, held in October, 1942, and attended by 322 health workers, Professor C.-E. A. Winslow said: “The Health Education Institute is a most remarkable institution and it is a great pleasure to watch its progress from year to year. . . . It is fascinating to see its scope widen and deepen.”

That the Institute has won the respect of public health leaders is a tribute to the Public Health Education Section which created and nurtured it at a time when the Section was still weak. More than one public health veteran has expressed astonishment when, engrossed in other affairs, he accidentally discovered for the first time perhaps, the vigor and exuberance of this offspring of the Section. The records of its origin are scanty, and I am indebted to several friends who have aided my memory in reconstructing this sketch.

When the Health Education Section was groping its way in the late 20's, some of the Fellows of that Section felt that it was not enough merely to plan an annual program but that it should develop some means of helping the members to become better craftsmen in the art of health education. One suggestion made by Dr. Iago Galdston was that a definite course of instruction be provided in which the philosophy, art, and technic of health education would be taught. At the time there were few opportunities for a student to acquire such instruction in universities or schools of public health, and the worker already engaged who felt the need of a practical postgraduate course had simply nowhere to turn.

Galdston pointed out that from the membership of the Association itself, could be drawn specialists in a variety of skills such as no university could provide; and that an Institute would bring the school to the student without obligating him to sacrifice much time from his work. It was thought also that an Institute would help the Section to define more clearly its objectives and functions, for health education was a sprawling terrain with indefinite borders and unexplored areas. Finally, an Institute held in connection with the Annual Meeting of the Association, would be a means of reaching many health workers who seldom had opportunity to confer with more experienced colleagues. Since the Association's meeting was held each year in a different locality and attracted many attendants from nearby, each Institute would bring a short course to those who did not commonly enjoy the privilege of travel. It was not the purpose to duplicate the Section program, though it was difficult for some to see how that could be entirely avoided.

Galdston's suggestion was considered by the Council of the Section but no immediate action was taken. He per-

sisted however, and after some four years the Council appointed a committee to evolve a plan. This committee, consisting of Iago Galdston, Evart G. Routzahn, and H. E. Kleinschmidt, met early in 1932 and several times thereafter. It soon developed that the purpose of the Institute was not entirely clear even yet, for there was at first difference of opinion as to whether the course should be an authoritarian one in which the leaders would expound known facts and tested procedures, or a discussion outline for the exchange of ideas on new and not yet established methods, and on more or less technical questions. The former would be in the nature of an academic course, somewhat elementary and led by recognized leaders; the latter, more nearly of a research character, would be exploratory, discursive, critical, and of value primarily to those who had already attained a degree of mastery by reason of experience. To say that one method was of the "academy," and the other of the "university" type would be over-simplification, but at any rate, there was something favorable to be said for both.

Health education was attracting many new practitioners into its ranks and many of them were without much experience. To assist them in acquiring skill was a worthy enterprise. On the other hand, a considerable number of workers had already mastered the elements of health education and felt the need of group exploration; and that too would be of value to all, presumably, for new areas would thereby be discovered which would be for the common good. In the end, it was agreed that as a guiding policy it would be better to plan the Institute for those who wished elementary training.

Important as it seemed to the planning committee to establish a definite policy, the difficulty of actually living within it in practice became apparent

when the program was formulated and the sessions were held. As a matter of fact, the Institute partook of both methods, didactic and exploratory. In the announcement it was stated that:

The purpose of the Institute is to provide instruction in the content and methodology of Health Education to a limited number of persons actively engaged in Health Education. The students whom it is desired to attract to the Institute may or may not have had training in Health Education in one or the other of the few institutions where it is available. They may have had a little or considerable experience. They may devote all their time to this work or it may be merely one of several activities. In any event, Health Education is for them a major preoccupation and they must from time to time formulate programs of activities in Health Education and carry them through.

The first Institute was launched with fine enthusiasm and some misgiving. (By the way, the circular which announced the new venture was one of the handsomest pieces of printed matter ever issued by the Association.) The attitude of the Association was none too encouraging for, while authority to hold the Institute was duly granted, no great enthusiasm was manifested by the Association's governing body. However, the President of the Association in 1932, Dr. Louis I. Dublin, was energetic in his support and earnestly urged attendance, and the staff of the Association was more than helpful. A fee of \$5 and registration in advance were required of all students and this, it was feared, might be a deterrent. When the meeting opened, however, great numbers of unannounced students presented themselves in addition to those who had registered, and the quarters provided for the meeting proved entirely too small.

The staff of the Institute consisted of the following persons:

Iago Galdston, M.D., *Director*  
Bertrand Brown  
Evert G. Routzahn  
Mary Swain Routzahn

Clair E. Turner, Dr.P.H.  
W. W. Peter, M.D.  
Ira V. Hiscock  
H. E. Kleinschmidt, M.D.  
George C. Ruhland, M.D.  
W. W. Bauer, M.D.  
Raymond S. Patterson, Ph.D.

This staff made careful preparations and planned to avoid duplication as much as possible. What the staff set out to do is evidenced by the program:

#### FIRST SESSION

Discussion of the instruments employed in Health Education; pamphlets, weekly and monthly publications and bulletins, charts, posters, health talks and radio talks; their special utility and their limitations.

#### SECOND SESSION

The responsibility of the health educator for the authenticity of his material. How to go about securing dependable information to present on the items selected, to the indicated audiences, and through the preferred media. Tapping authoritative sources. The coöperation of the medical profession.

#### THIRD SESSION

How to formulate a program of Health Education suitable to the community. How to determine the allocation of staff, money, and effort. This problem will be considered from the viewpoint of both the official agency, that is, the department of health, and of the voluntary agencies.

#### FOURTH SESSION

The avenues through which the program might be formulated; the population at large, special groups, schools, primary and secondary, teacher training organizations, work shops and work places, commercial organizations, etc.

It was a stimulating meeting, though not without its faults. Very soon after assembly it became apparent that the experience levels of the members of the group were of wide divergence, and this made it impossible to keep the discussion always on a common level. For each session there were a chairman, a discussion leader, and a discussor. Interruptions from the floor were invited, which privilege was freely utilized, and therefore it became impos-

sible to control the direction of the discussion. My recollection is that there was considerable wandering from the topic. But not once during those three tightly packed days did interest flag, and it was generally felt that the Institute had vividly demonstrated its need and value. After that trial experience there was no further question about repeating the effort. In succeeding Institutes the student group was divided into sections, each dealing with a different topic. At the final general session reporters summarized the proceedings of each section, so that all might share at least the more important highlights. In subsequent years, new problems have arisen, the charted course has been altered from time to time and new leaders have come to the fore—but that is another story.

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From the *American Journal of Public Health*, June 1939:

"Members of the Public Health Education Section of the American Public Health Association deeply mourn the loss of their leader and friend, Evert G. Routzahn. It is almost impossible for us to think of the Section without him, for it was his per-

sonality that gave it zest and color. At a time when only a scattered few were giving serious thought to health education as a specialty of public health E G R saw the advantage of banding such workers together. He nursed the founding section, laid on the doorstep of the American Public Health Association, until it was accepted as a lusty member of the public health family. All through the years he guided its stumbling gait and, happily, he enjoyed the satisfaction of seeing his child grow sturdy and respected.

"Though E G R never sought honor nor office, both were thrust upon him and he carried them well. For the sheer love of the cause he labored for its well-being. Each month his cryptic paragraphs in the *Journal* stimulated us; many of us turned first to his pages. Annually his exhibit was the rallying place of all loyal members of the Section, and many a youngster and veteran in the field of health education found treasure there. To E G R we turned often and never in vain. With the advice he gave there was always a glint of humor, with his service always a beaming smile. His criticism, eagerly sought, was always penetrating, but never with a sting. Mostly we loved him for his friendliness—for his bubbling good will.

"We thank God that the bench mark E G R is indelibly impressed upon the Public Health Education Section. Time, which mellows sorrow, will never efface that bench mark. We who worked, and planned, and laughed with him have been enriched by the comradeship, and that wealth grows more precious with his passing."